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Foundamentalism & Modernism

FOSDICK CASE

COMPLAINT

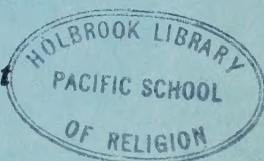
OF

Walter D. Buchanan and Others

TO

The 136th General Assembly
of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.

Against



The Presbytery of New York

IN ITS ANSWER TO

THE MANDATE

OF

The 135th General Assembly
of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.

Grand Rapids, Mich., May 1924

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Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. General Assembly

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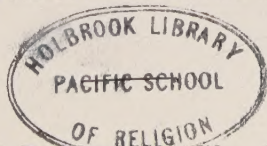
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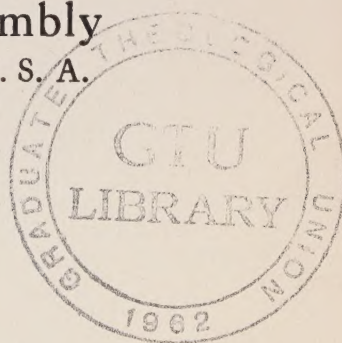
THE MANDATE

OF

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Grand Rapids, Mich., May 1924



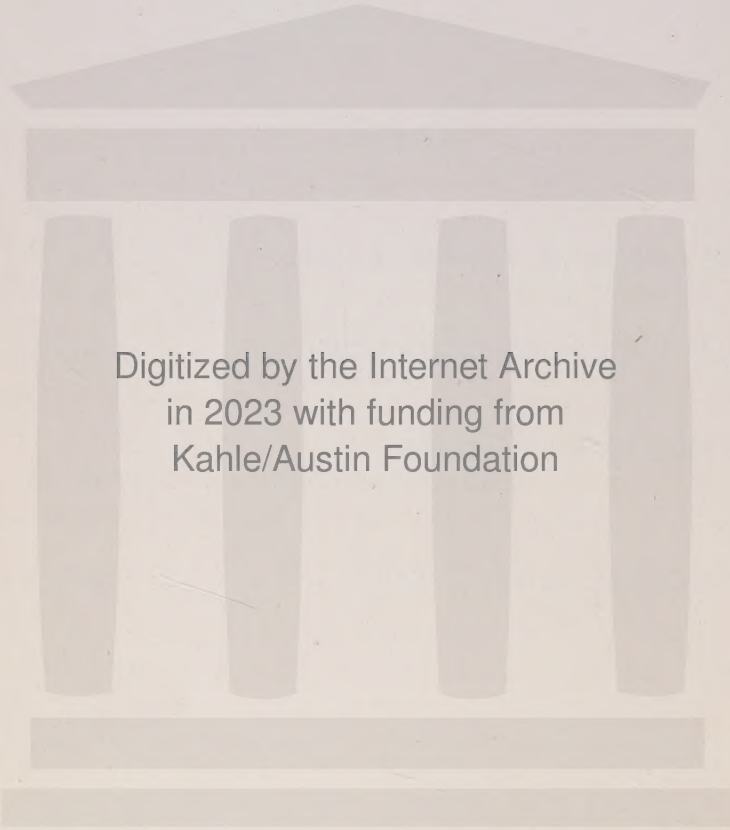
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THE MANDATE
of the
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF 1923

"The 135th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America in answer to the Petition of the Overture presented by the Presbytery of Philadelphia regarding the public proclamation of the word in the Pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church of New York City, expresses its profound sorrow that doctrines contrary to the standards of the Presbyterian Church, proclaimed in said Pulpit, have been the cause of controversy and division in our Church and therefore would direct the Presbytery of New York to take such action, (either through its present Committee or by the appointment of a special commission) as will require the preaching and teaching in the First Presbyterian Church of New York to conform to the system of doctrines taught in the Confession of Faith; and that said Presbytery report its action in a full transcript of its records to the 136th General Assembly of 1924." (Minutes General Assembly p. 253, 1923.)

Following this mandate the General Assembly reaffirmed the deliverance of the General Assembly of 1910.

PRESBYTERY OF NEW YORK

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The Presbytery of New York, April 9th, 1923, on recommendation of the Moderator's Council, appointed a committee consisting of Rev. Edgar W. Work, D.D., Rev. A. Edwin Keigwin, D.D., Rev. Charles L. Thompson, D.D., Mr. Alfred E. Marling and Mr. George B. Agnew, to consider a petition from the Harlem New York Presbyterian Church, asking Presbytery to take action on certain matters that had to do with the First Presbyterian Church.

On June 11th, the Presbytery received from the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, an action taken by that body at Indianapolis, Indiana, May, 1923, "directing the Presbytery of New York to take such action (either through its present Committee or by the appointment of a special commission), as will require the preaching and teaching in the First Presbyterian Church of New York to conform to the system of doctrines taught in the Confession of Faith; and that said Presbytery report its action in a full transcript of its records to the 136th General Assembly of 1924." This communication was referred to the above special committee of Presbytery.

At a meeting of Presbytery October 1st, 1923, the committee reported progress.

On January 14th, 1924, this committee made the accompanying report with recommendations to Presbytery. This report was received and consideration and action thereon were postponed until February 4th, when the Presbytery will meet in the First Presbyterian Church at 2 o'clock, this being the only business before it. In the meantime the report was ordered printed and sent to the members of Presbytery.

H. G. MENDENHALL, Stated Clerk,
156 Fifth Avenue, New York.

INTRODUCTORY WORDS BY THE CHAIRMAN—DR. WORK

Mr. Moderator:

We are about to listen to a report on a subject on which there are differences of opinion.

It is just possible that we have been magnifying our differences, until we have drifted unconsciously into the feeling of an irreparable distance between brethren.

In hours of great stress and strain in the human mind, God has been known to surprise men with unusual evidences of His Presence, and with an overpowering sense of spiritual unities in the very midst of diversities.

Much depends no doubt upon the faith and expectation of men's hearts. That these spiritual unities are not far away is not for one moment to be doubted, for it is the mind of Christ to unite His people not to divide them.

I would be loath to read a report on this difficult and delicate subject, if I did not believe that the unities of the faith are greater and more triumphant than the diversities, and that there are many of God's people who are united in prayer to-day that the church may be drawn together, not driven apart. That the feeling of these spiritual unities that bring men together may be found throughout this writing is my earnest hope and prayer.

Let all the people say Amen!

REPORT TO THE PRESBYTERY OF NEW YORK OF THE COMMITTEE IN MATTERS RELATING TO THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NEW YORK.

JANUARY 14, 1924

The Committee of the Presbytery of New York, to which matters relating to the First Church of this city were committed, begs leave to report.

This Committee was in existence for another purpose prior to the meeting of the General Assembly in Indianapolis last May. Following the action of the Assembly at that meeting, the Presbytery re-appointed the Committee, with instructions to take up the subject referred to in the action of the Assembly. The Presbytery stated in its action at the June meeting that it would consider the subject with great earnestness and that it would pay due deference to the wishes of the Assembly. In view of the importance of the subject, the Presbytery also stated that it would require time. This Committee now reports that it has been diligent throughout the intervening months. We have been solicitous that we might be guided of God in the whole matter. We have been busy with a large correspondence, with the reading of documents, and with numerous meetings, interviews and conferences. Believing that the Church is entitled to a full statement of the situation, so far as it can be set forth on paper, the Committee resolved that it would not offer to a disturbed church a hastily formed report. The Presbytery may be assured that there has been no unnecessary delay.

The action of the General Assembly conveying directions to the Presbytery of New York on the subject of the preaching and teaching in the First Presbyterian Church has been widely discussed. It is generally believed that the Assembly's action creates issues that are very important in their nature, concerning which Christian men of like integrity and faithfulness may rightly claim the privilege to differ. The scope of the action, and the actual ultimate intention of the Assembly in taking the action, have been open to just inquiry. Moreover the form in which

the action was issued, in the judgment of many men in many Presbyteries, raises questions of a constitutional order, which cannot easily be ignored. The Committee is not capable of showing any disrespect to the supreme court of our church, nor does it intend any, when it states that questions of this character lie in the minds of many men of moderate views and uncontroversial temper, who have not the remotest thought of indifference or disobedience to constituted authority. There is unquestionably much anxiety in the church over the purity and integrity of doctrine. On the other hand there is much concern that the liberties to which we have long been accustomed shall not be abridged. This Committee feels the delicacy and difficulty of reporting upon a subject that is close to many hearts. We beg our brethren to understand that we have striven in every way to give a frank and unprejudiced judgment.

This Committee, however, has not felt called upon to take up such questions of constitutional order and authority as have just been alluded to. Questions of this nature do not belong to us, important as they may be. The Committee believes that it would be wise in all the circumstances to seek the appointment of a commission to investigate the powers of the General Assembly in relation to doctrine, in the spirit of the requirement made in the Form of Government, Chapter XXIV, Section III. To a proposal of this kind we think that the Presbytery of New York would gladly lend its support.

The General Assembly in its action in May at Indianapolis directed "the Presbytery of New York to take such action (either through its present Committee or by the appointment of a Special Commission) as will require the preaching and teaching in the First Presbyterian Church of New York to conform to the system of doctrines taught in the Confession of Faith, and that said Presbytery report its action in a full transcript of its records to the 136th General Assembly of 1924." This action of the Assembly is explicit. The Committee has never had any doubt on this subject. To this clear mandate of the General Assembly the

Committee, representing the Presbytery of New York, has addressed itself from first to last.

The Committee now reports to Presbytery upon the course it has pursued, and the steps it has taken, in the effort to carry out the directions of the General Assembly.

The Committee states that it has taken up the action of the General Assembly with the parties concerned and has explained the action and enforced the authority of the General Assembly to the best of its ability. It has conferred directly with the Session of the First Church and has obtained from the Session a statement which will be submitted to the Presbytery. It has also conferred directly with the Stated Preacher in the First Church, and has obtained from him a statement which will be submitted to Presbytery. The Committee has studied the situation in the First Church on its administrative side with the view of determining the effect of the plan adopted by this congregation for a plural ministry, including a minister of another denomination than our own. The Committee has also studied the preaching and teaching in the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church, with the view of determining the ground of apprehension concerning its alleged lack of conformity to the Confession of Faith. The Committee has reached certain conclusions on these subjects and is prepared to offer counsel and recommendations to Presbytery pertaining to the whole matter.

Our conference and correspondence with the pastors and elders of the First Church have afforded us ample opportunity to know their mind on the subject under discussion. They have provided us with full information from their records and have co-operated with us to the fullest extent in the pursuit of our inquiry. While the pastors and elders of the First Church regret that the General Assembly did not see its way clear to make fraternal inquiry by methods of its own before taking open action on the subject, the Committee is happy to report that it found no bitterness among our brethren in the First Church. We are not mistaken in our judgment that the Session of the First

Church harbors no disloyalty toward the General Assembly, and no indifference toward our doctrinal standards.

Following is the statement of the pastors and elders of the First Church, made to this Committee:

December 11th, 1923.

TO THE COMMITTEE of the PRESBYTERY OF NEW YORK,

Rev. Edgar Whitaker Work, D.D., Chairman.

Dear Dr. Work,

The Session of the First Presbyterian Church has heartily welcomed the Presbytery's inquiry into the condition and doings of the congregation which they represent.

It is deeply grieved that a Church, conservative in its traditions and temper, should have become, largely through misunderstanding, subject to suspicion regarding its loyalty and soundness in the faith.

It has already explained orally to your Committee that the plan by which a distinguished minister of another denomination was invited to associate himself with the pastor of the First Church was not of its devising. It was one which the congregation was led to adopt through force of circumstances, but in which the Session heartily concurred. It did so not thoughtlessly or with any intention of creating disturbance in the household of faith to which it belongs.

Three historic churches had just become one in law, but not yet in fact. It had failed to secure as pastor the Presbyterian minister whom it sought and was in danger of disintegration. The minds of the people then turned toward a preacher whose temporary service they had found helpful and inspiring. With hesitation and after earnest prayer for guidance it was decided to make the venture of a plural ministry, with the preaching function largely dissociated from the pastoral and administrative service. This method would not have been adopted had it not been an era of good feeling in the Presbyterian Church and of longing for Christian unity as evidenced in the General Assembly

of that year when its members, by a unanimous and rising vote, declared their "profound conviction that the time had come for organic union of the evangelical churches of America."

The Session was fully aware of the fact that it would be very unusual to have as Stated Preacher a minister not subject to the jurisdiction of Presbytery. It therefore took pains to have the plan, which had been widely published, submitted in all its details to the Presbytery of New York before the relation was consummated.

When the Presbytery had given unanimous approval and its action when reviewed by Synod was unchallenged, the Session assumed that any irregularity in the proceedings had been cured. It is of the same opinion still.

The venture has been attended with signal tokens of Divine favor. Another Presbyterian minister was shortly called to be associate pastor. The three ministers, differing in temperament and in shades of theological opinion have labored together in absolute harmony. Three congregations different in customs and ecclesiastical traditions have been cemented together in a most gracious fellowship. The contributions of the Church to Presbyterian objects have increased until they are several times greater than those of the three former churches combined. The Gospel has been proclaimed with earnestness and with great power and many educated youth alienated from the Church and from Christ have been transformed in spirit and in life.

The Session has been charged with disobedience to the General Assembly because it declined to transmit to the congregation the resignation presented by Dr. Fosdick in May last. It disclaims any such intention. It is true that the action of the General Assembly is so framed that it might be interpreted as a prejudgment of a matter with which it had directed the Presbytery of New York to deal. The Session, however, preferred to believe that the Assembly did not intend to pronounce a final judgment without at least giving a hearing to the accused. It therefore decided that it should endeavor to preserve the status

quo until the Presbytery had acted in obedience to the Assembly's mandate. Its silence, meanwhile, under accusations of disloyalty should not be interpreted as defiance of authority, but as avoidance of strife.

To the specific question asked, among many others, by your Committee—"How were the Elders of the First Presbyterian Church impressed by the sermon entitled: 'Shall the Fundamentalists Win?'"—it is not easy to make definite answer. The members of Session are in the habit of doing their own thinking and their reactions to the sermon in question were not identical. We can only indicate their general consensus of opinion.

(1) We applaud the motive which prompted this sermon and its purpose which was, as indicated by the text, to inculcate the duty of mutual tolerance while waiting for God, in His providence, and by His Spirit to decide questions in dispute.

(2) It seemed to us, however, that the title of the sermon was ill chosen and provocative. It sounded more like a challenge to battle than a plea for harmony and peace. Nevertheless, we made due allowance for the fact that the preacher had been aroused by a theological controversy then acute in another communion.

(3) The sermon itself seemed to us open to misunderstanding and criticism, for the reason, that while the preacher presented two extreme views on several points of christian doctrine and did not clearly define his own position with regard to them, his hearers might not unreasonably infer that he was personally committed to all the advanced opinions for which he asked toleration.

(4) As a Session, and individually, we disclaim any responsibility for the wide circulation of the sermon in slightly altered form and with a challenging foreword inviting attention to the fact that such a sermon could be preached in the First Presbyterian Church. This was done without the knowledge of any of us and by a person to us unknown.

The members of Session deeply deplore the distress thus given to many devout souls who had to judge the preacher by the printed sermon instead of judging the sermon by what they knew of the preacher. To the Elders and congregation of the First Church it was not an isolated utterance but a regrettable incident in the ministry of one whom they had learned to love and honor for his loyalty to Christ and his spiritual power.

(5) In expressing as we do our sorrow that occasion has been given for unrest and conflict in the Church which is dear to us, we desire to emphasize the fact that the sermon in question was exceptional. The preaching in the First Church is ordinarily uncontroversial, but searching, inspiring, and full of the spirit of the Gospel. It is devoid of sensationalism and deals almost exclusively with the great themes of evangelical religion,—The Reality of God, the Deity of Christ, His Incarnation, Sinlessness and Vicarious Sacrifice, His Resurrection from the Dead, and His Indwelling in Believers; The Sinfulness of Sin, The Call to Repentance, The Necessity for a New Birth, and The Beauty of the New Life in the Spirit.

These subjects are presented with profound understanding of the workings of the modern mind and with evident desire to clothe ancient truth in the common language of today, in order to make it more winsome and convincing.

Permit the Session to say in conclusion that the more deeply your Committee may probe into the present situation in the First Church the better it will be pleased. It hopes to convince you that it would not knowingly tolerate in its pulpit teachings unevangelical or subversive to the historic faith of the Presbyterian Church. If, in the judgment of Presbytery, it has been in any particular derelict it will accept admonition in the spirit which the Gospel requires.

Faithfully yours,

(Signed) HENRY H. TIFFT,

(Signed) GEORGE ALEXANDER

Clerk of Session.

(Signed) THOMAS GUTHRIE SPEERS

Pastors

In this letter the Session does several things that are important in the judgment of the Committee. The Session claims for the First Church loyalty and soundness in the faith, and expresses grief that suspicion and controversy have arisen concerning its affairs. It explains the plan of a multiple ministry which was adopted by the congregation, with the unanimous approval of Session, and later of Presbytery, admitting its anomalous character in Presbyterian practice and justifying it as a measure required to meet unusual conditions. It testifies that the plan has not worked any disaster, but rather, in their judgment, has safeguarded the consolidation of the three churches, and has tended to harmony, fellowship and increased efficiency and usefulness. It disavows any intention of disloyalty in the action concerning the resignation of the Stated Preacher following the action of the Assembly, and explains its attitude in this matter.

It answers specifically the question which was one among many asked by this Committee, concerning the sermon entitled—"Shall the Fundamentalists Win?", applauding its motive, but questioning the use of a provocative title, and admitting also that the sermon was open to misunderstanding and criticism. For the circulation of this sermon the Session disclaims responsibility, and deeply deplores the distress occasioned in many directions. The Session insists that this sermon was exceptional, and that the preaching and teaching in their pulpit is ordinarily uncontroversial, dealing with the claims of religion upon humanity and the doctrines of grace that center in our Lord and Saviour. The Session affirms that it would not knowingly tolerate in its pulpit teachings unevangelical or subversive to the historic faith of the Presbyterian Church. And finally it states that it will accept admonition from the Presbytery if Presbytery deems that such admonition is needed. The Committee understands this to mean that it acknowledges the full responsibility belonging to Sessions of Presbyterian churches respecting the public proclamation of the gospel.

The Committee commends this frank, discriminating and

loyal statement of the Session of the First Church to the Presbytery and to the church at large.

We come now directly to the question of the preaching and teaching in the First Presbyterian Church. On this subject the Committee is frankly desirous of helping to remove distrust. The further we have gone in our inquiries the more we have been convinced of the danger of injustice in this connection. It is part of the history of the church that it has often listened to charges that were not wholly justified. The zeal that good men feel for purity of doctrine often leads them to suspicions that are unwarranted. It is not to be doubted that one of the safest cures for controversy that tends to division, is the awakening of confidence, the setting free of men's spirits in mutual trust.

At a time some years ago when this Presbytery was undergoing trial, a beloved member of the Presbytery, widely reputed for his wisdom and fidelity in preaching the gospel, wrote a private letter in which he spoke of the dangers that may arise in time of earnest contention for the faith. Now that the presence of Dr. John H. Jowett is a gracious memory in the church militant, his wholesome words are worth recalling. "I yield to none," he wrote, "in zealous guardianship and proclamation of the central and fundamental doctrines of the evangelical faith, and I think there was never a time when there was greater need for those doctrines to be proclaimed. It is imperative that we be solidly united in sacred loyalty to all truth that is essential to the regeneration and sanctification of the soul and the creation of men and women in Christ Jesus. But it is possible to so contend, even for central things, as to lose the sense of relation and proportion; and by the manner of our controversy we may lose the clear sight of the supreme values. The first necessity of all vital and tenacious hold upon the evangelical verities, and of fruitful ministry in them, is the spirit of the Lord Jesus. It is this spirit and this alone that clarifies the atmosphere, removing the confusing, obscuring medium of suspicion, misunderstanding and unholy anger and resentment."

With the sound of such wise counsel in our ears the Committee proceeds to state the grounds upon which we rest our appeal for the restoration of confidence.

After earnest conference and extended correspondence with our brother who is serving as Stated Preacher in the First Church, in which the Committee sought to make clear the bearing of the action of the Assembly upon his ministry in that church, we have received from him the following statement:

December 28, 1923.

To the Committee of the Presbytery of New York,

Rev. Edgar Whitaker Work, D.D., Chairman.

Dear Dr. Work:

I welcome the opportunity which the appointment of your committee affords me to express my attitude toward the theological controversy in the Presbyterian Church which, in part at least, has centered in me.

For many months now I have been the object of attack and until this letter I have made no public reply. Nor do I write this in a controversial mood. Any gentleman dislikes to be a cause of disturbance in a neighbor's household, and as an ordained minister of another denomination preaching in a Presbyterian pulpit I am profoundly sorry that contention has arisen because of me. For this reason I already have resigned from the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church once and now retain my position there only because of the unanimous desire of the church's Session and their insistence that withdrawal would do more harm than good.

In spite of sharp differences of opinion between two prevalent schools of theological thought, and in spite of the unmistakable fact that I am committed to the side called "liberal," I confess that I have been surprised at the misinterpretation of my position which has been spread broadcast. If I did not regard myself as an evangelical Christian, I certainly should not be

preaching in an evangelical pulpit. Nor was there ever a day when one in earnest about his faith would wish his unqualified Christian allegiance to be more manifest than now. These are days when the Christian faith is being resolutely assailed, when materialistic naturalism is presenting a perilous problem, when many are in doubt, when Christianity faces alike one of its supreme crises and supreme opportunities. These are days when every man who seriously and deeply believes in the Gospel of Jesus Christ wants to be counted on that side and not on any other. It goes hard with me, therefore, to find myself and whatever influence I may possess rated as against things I really am for and for things I really am against.

I am in the ministry of the evangelical churches because I belong there and nowhere else—reared in evangelical Christianity, converted in it, convinced of it, and ready to live and die for it. The liberty I claim to think through the Gospel in terms real and cogent in our own time is, I am sure, not a denial of the Gospel but one of the most precious and sacred privileges and responsibilities which our evangelical forefathers claimed for themselves, fought for, and gloriously used.

Personally I have no patience with an emasculated Christianity that denudes the Gospel of its superhuman elements, its redeeming power, and its eternal hopes. I believe in the personal God revealed in Christ, in his omnipresent activity and endless resources to achieve his purposes for us and all men; I believe in Christ, his deity, his sacrificial saviorhood, his resurrected and triumphant life, his rightful Lordship, and the indispensableness of his message to mankind. In the indwelling Spirit I believe, the forgiveness of sins, the redeemed and victorious life, the triumph of righteousness on earth, and the life everlasting. This faith I find in the Scriptures and the objective of my ministry is to lead men to the Scriptures as the standard and norm of religious experience—the progressive self-revelation of God in the history of a unique people, culminating in Christ. To the proclamation of the Gospel with such elements of abiding experience at the

heart of it I am giving myself—trying to translate it into terms that will penetrate the intelligence and challenge the conscience of the oncoming generation.

I am not, therefore, an enemy of the Gospel of Christ, a denier of the profound experiences and convictions which in all ages have been the glory of the church, the substance of her creeds, and the source of her power. Nor, as I understand it, are those who like me are called liberals. We are men at the center of whose life is a profound faith in God revealed in Christ for man's salvation, and we are facing with passionate earnestness the needs of this disturbed, doubting, and often wistful generation, endeavoring as our fathers did in their days to interpret the everlasting Gospel to our own time in terms that our own time can understand.

The joy of my ministry is now, as it always has been, to lead men into vital relationship with Jesus Christ, to bring them under the spell of his Mastership, and to inspire them to make him and all that he stands for dominant in the life of the world. Never did this ministry seem so much worth while; never were its fruits more manifest; and all my days I hope to give myself to it in the freedom with which Christ set us free.

Very sincerely yours,
(Signed) HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK.

Referring to this letter, the Committee wishes to say that there is a certain solemnity and impressiveness about the confession of a man's faith in circumstances such as these that will not be overlooked by earnest men. The Committee confidently asks for a careful and prayerful consideration of this solemn affirmation of faith.

It is easy to foresee that objections may be made. Some may say that words are used in a different sense from that to which the church has been accustomed. Criticism of this nature almost invariably contains the seeds of a subtle injustice.

Others may be inclined to draw inferences and make implications in the circumstances which may or may not be correct. Exactly a hundred years ago the General Assembly refused to sustain a charge of heresy against a minister who had been convicted by a lower court on the ground of inferences which he himself denied. The Assembly ruled that it is a principle "that no man can rightly be convicted of heresy by inference or implication." Caution is advised in charging "any man with an opinion which he disavows." (Minutes of the General Assembly for 1824, pp. 122—124).

There may also be those who will feel that the "five points" announced by the General Assembly are not sufficiently covered in the statement. The Committee has already stated the belief that is held by many that the constitutional questions involved in this matter should be taken up in the manner provided by our Form of Government.

What is especially clear to the Committee is that the doctrines of grace are strongly affirmed in the statement. Further our study of the preaching and teaching in the First Church convinces us that the doctrines of grace are being proclaimed in the pulpit of that church. Not only so, we believe that they are being proclaimed with power and in a manner that is producing an unusual impression upon the part of many persons who have grown careless as to the claims of the Christian religion. While we find abundant evidence of variant methods, of new approaches, even of original adaptations of spiritual teaching to the ways of men's minds in our time, we do not find that the grace of God in salvation through Jesus Christ is being obscured or hampered. Rather it is our conclusion that these doctrines of the grace of God through Christ are receiving new force and urgency for times like ours. The Session of the Church solemnly testifies that the preaching is evangelical in meaning and force. The pastors and the fourteen elders of the church are entitled to be heard on this subject. Many of the elders are of long Presby-

terian ancestry, and a number of them are conservative in temper and training.

This Committee is also deeply impressed by what we have learned of the effect of the public proclamation of the Word in the First Church. Few such challenging voices have ever been heard in this city in defense of religion. There is no hint of sensationalism in the sermons. They are serious, studied affirmations of religious truth, intended to convince men that they cannot live rightly in this world without God and Christ and the Holy Spirit. The fact of sin and the need of a Savior are proclaimed with conviction and power. The Savior is Jesus Christ, and there is none other name that the preacher knows. In our judgment there can be no mistake concerning the tremendous challenge of this voice in the pulpit to a generation that tends to play fast and loose with religion. The arrest of thought that has been produced on religious subjects in this great and careless city is a fact that cannot be gainsaid.

Admitting the variant points of view, conceding that there are divergences in mode and form, this Committee, composed of men of moderate views, cannot resist the judgment that the Christian religion is receiving in the preaching and teaching in the First Church an impressive advocacy. The preacher is the implacable foe of the principal enemies of Christianity in modern times. The full force of the preaching lends itself, as we believe, to the maintenance of the spiritual ideals of Christianity, and the teaching and spirit of Jesus in thinking and conduct.

No one who knows the facts intimately can deny that the force of this ministry is also restorative of faith. Scores and hundreds, of young people especially, including many students, are responding to the quickening effect of this ministry. The Committee has received many testimonies to the return of faith, and none to the loss of faith, under this ministry. The preacher is keenly aware of the drift of many in our time out into the sea of doubt and unbelief. One of the principal aims of his ministry is to call men back to faith—back to faith in Christ.

This Committee gives great weight to the solemn declaration made by the Session of the First Church, that the preaching and teaching in the First Church deals almost exclusively with the great themes of evangelical religion—the Reality of God, the Deity of Christ, His Incarnation, Sinlessness and Vicarious Sacrifice, His Resurrection from the Dead, and His Indwelling in Believers, the Sinfulness of Sin, the Call to Repentance, the Necessity for a New Birth, and the Beauty of the New Life in the Spirit. It is impossible for this Committee to believe that a body of experienced Presbyterians, ministers and elders, would unanimously subscribe to a statement such as this without a profound conviction of its truth.

Less than this the Committee cannot say in recognition of the immense influence being exerted in this community by our Baptist brother who came five years ago as an invited guest with the full approval of Presbytery to the pulpit of the First Church. If his voice should for any reason fall silent, the Committee believes that it would be an incalculable loss and calamity to the church of God in this city, where so many different seas of thought meet in conflict and storm.

The Committee regrets that there are any qualifying remarks that need to be made, and we make them with hesitation, yet with the same conviction which we have put into our testimony to the evangelical character of the preaching.

It is inevitable that mistakes of judgment and emphasis will occur in a ministry such as we have described. It is the belief of this Committee that mistakes have occurred. The preacher is engaged in a task that is beset with perils, the task of approaching modern ways of thinking with the message of the gospel. It is almost to be expected that zeal in this direction might carry him beyond guide-posts and moorings of the past. This is the danger of all men who mediate between the past and the present. They are committed in their own minds so largely to the destinies of the coming time that they may all too easily underestimate values and obligations that have come down to us out of the past.

Further they are particularly open to misunderstanding and misinterpretation. The language that they use may have a new and unfamiliar sound, that seems to give ground for alarm. It is our judgment that one who takes upon himself the difficult task of the adaptation of the past to the present in matters of faith should exercise extraordinary care in dealing with subjects concerning which deep feeling exists, and about which the faith of men is much concerned.

This Committee therefore agrees with the Session of the First Church that the sermon "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" while seeking a laudable end, was captioned by an objectionable and challenging title, that tended to contention and strife. We further agree with the Session that the sermon was open to misunderstanding, and, like the Session, we regret its wide circulation, and deplore the serious distress and disturbances to which it has given rise in many minds. We go further to say that while we are sure that the preaching and teaching in the First Church has never spoken any denial of the church's doctrine of the Virgin Birth of our Lord, it is our judgment that the manner in which this subject was dealt with in the sermon mentioned, is open to painful misconstruction and just objection.

It is well to remember in this connection that Dr. Fosdick allows no man to question his belief in the deity of Christ. To lose this cardinal fact of the gospel, he has frequently said, would result in the uprooting of his whole Christian experience. If such a spiritual calamity ever came to pass in his faith, he has solemnly affirmed that he would at once leave the evangelical pulpit.

We have already indicated our belief that there is strong ground for assurance as to the evangelical fruits of the preaching and teaching of this pulpit. At the same time we cannot but feel deeply concerned about the wide disturbance that has come into the church. Wise men will address themselves to the cure of this disturbance with earnest prayer and with a purpose to do

justice to all concerned. They will also seek the wisest ways of bringing about a better understanding.

The Committee has endeavored in this report to present grounds for the restoration of confidence, and we are sure that the Presbytery of New York desires to do all that it can justly do to aid in this measure. It is our hope that the signed statements and the information herewith presented together with the conclusions given may contribute to a clearer understanding of the situation.

The real **crux** of this situation, the Committee feels, lies in the fact that the Presbyterian Church is accustomed to a ministry that recognizes the obligation of ordination vows. This is the genius and method of our system of government, and it cannot safely be ignored. While we deprecate too narrow and binding an interpretation of such vows, we are certain that the failure to recognize such obligations would be destructive of the Presbyterian conception of church government, as relating especially to ministers and the teaching of doctrine. It is natural that a church, constituted as the Presbyterian Church is, should insist upon the recognition of this fact.

It is therefore the judgment of this Committee that this conception of an obligation to the denomination must be fairly met in the case of a member of another denomination who is invited to minister statedly in one of our pulpits.

We do not doubt that this Presbytery understands that it has no direct jurisdiction over the Stated Preacher in the First Church. Nevertheless the Presbytery cannot be indifferent to the responsibility which is inherent in Presbyterian government. There is moreover an indirect jurisdiction of the Presbytery in such a case, based upon the conception of the duties of an invited guest. It is our belief that a minister from another denomination, occupying one of our pulpits, should voluntarily wear responsibilities and obligations, which, although not based upon the force of ordination vows, are nevertheless real and cogent in the circumstances. This Committee has no reason to doubt that

Dr. Fosdick feels the force of these obligations, and that he will willingly accept counsel and direction from this Presbytery of which he is a corresponding member.

We feel further that the statement of the Session of the First Church submitted in this report must awaken both gratitude and confidence. We particularly welcome the affirmation made by the Session that "it would not knowingly tolerate in its pulpit teachings unevangelical or subversive to the historic faith of the Presbyterian Church." It is clear that the Session accepts the responsibility that belongs to sessions in Presbyterian churches of safeguarding the preaching and teaching of the pulpit.

The present report of the Committee is not necessarily a final report. If the Presbytery shall think best, in all the circumstances, to continue this Committee in its work, the Committee will be prepared to report further to the Presbytery, as occasion may require.

The Committee now offers to the Presbytery the following recommendations:

First. Since the committee reports that the doctrines of grace, centering in Our Lord Jesus Christ, are being proclaimed in the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church, it is the judgment of the Presbytery that the preaching and teaching in that pulpit conform to the system of doctrines taught in the Confession of Faith. The Presbytery further expresses its confident expectation that our brother of another denomination who enjoys the freedom of that pulpit will carry on his work in all good conscience, and in the light of the doctrines held dear in the Presbyterian Church.

Second. The Presbytery expresses its confidence in the loyalty of the Session of the First Church, and particularly in the wisdom and devotion of our beloved brother, the Rev. George Alexander, D.D., the pastor of the First Church. The Presbytery further records its satisfaction with the statement of the Session as to its understanding of the duty of sessions in safeguarding

the preaching and teaching of the pulpit, in accordance with the doctrinal standards of our church.

Third. The Presbytery holds itself in readiness to receive further reports on this subject, and to take further steps in relation to it, as occasion may require.

Fourth. The Presbytery affirms its belief in the Bible as the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and in all the doctrines of grace and salvation belonging to evangelical Christianity. The Presbytery further declares that it sorrows deeply over controversy and strife, and that it is its desire and intention to address itself to prayer and the ministry of the Word; to the building up of our churches, to the work of evangelism, soul-winning and social welfare in this great city, and to the propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ at home and abroad.

Conscious that we have striven with loyalty and fairness to carry out the directions sent to this Presbytery by the General Assembly, and trusting that no man may be able to discover in this writing aught but a controlling purpose to promote the truth as it is in Christ, and to further his sacred cause in the world, the Committee unanimously and respectfully submits this Report to the Presbytery of New York, praying that it may have studious and prayerful attention from all who are concerned.

EDGAR WHITAKER WORK, Chairman	
CHARLES L. THOMPSON	GEORGE B. AGNEW
A. EDWIN KEIGWIN	ALFRED E. MARLING.

NOTICE OF COMPLAINT.

To the Rev. Harlan G. Mendenhall, D.D.,

Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of New York.

Dear Sir:

We, the undersigned, members of the Presbytery of New York, hereby give written notice of a Complaint and the reasons therefor to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, to meet at Grand Rapids, Michi-

gan, on the third Thursday of May, A. D. 1924, against the action and decision of the Presbytery of New York given on the 4th day of February, 1924, in adopting the answer submitted by the Committee of the Presbytery of New York appointed by the Presbytery of New York on April 9th, 1923, and to which was referred the mandate of the General Assembly "directing the Presbytery of New York to take such action (either through its present Committee or by the appointment of a special commission) as will require the preaching and teaching in the First Presbyterian Church of New York to conform to the system of doctrines taught in the Confession of Faith; and that said Presbytery report its action in a full transcript of its records to the 136th General Assembly of 1924." (Minutes, p. 253, 1923.) The Complaint and the grounds or reasons of this Complaint are hereby attached and made part of this notice.

Ministers

Walter D. Buchanan,
Edgar Crossland,
David Roswell Wylie,
Albert D. Gantz,
John McNeill,
Paul D. Elsesser,
Henry M. Tyndall,
John C. Chapman,

Charles T. Schaeffer,
Wilson Aull,
George E. Sehlbrede,
George J. Russell,
James Palmer,
James A. McCague,
Frederick W. Evans,
Mebane Ramsay,

Elders

A. T. Patterson,
H. Percival Riley,
B. F. Van Kannell,

Hans P. Freece,
W. A. Richmond,
C. W. Smith.

THE COMPLAINT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

To the Venerable Body, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Greetings:

In the matter of the action of the Presbytery of New York respecting the adoption of the Report of the Committee of said

Presbytery to whom was referred the mandate of the General Assembly for consideration, with instructions from the Presbytery of New York "to take up the subject referred to in the action of the Assembly," namely, "directing the Presbytery of New York to take such action as will require the preaching and teaching in the First Presbyterian Church of New York to conform to the system of doctrine taught in the Confession of Faith," (Minutes of General Assembly, p. 253, 1923), the undersigned hereby complain to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America of the action of the Presbytery of New York in the above entitled matter, and for reasons in support of such Complaint state the following:

Believing that the controversy aroused by the issuing, publishing and dissemination of a sermon preached in the First Presbyterian Church, New York, entitled, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win" in which were asserted doctrines contrary to the Standards of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America was and is the cause of division in the Presbyterian Church and upon which the General Assembly based its action of 1923, and believing that the spread and influence of these dangerous errors are not condemned by the Report of the Committee of the Presbytery of New York and believing that a special responsibility rests upon the General Assembly which is charged with the duty of deciding in all controversies respecting doctrines; of reproof, warning, or bearing testimony against error in doctrine, in any Church, Presbytery or Synod and in cases that effect or concern the promotion of truth and holiness throughout all the Churches under its care as set forth in Chapter XII., Sections 4 and 5, of the Form of Government; and in view of the desirableness of a speedy settlement of this most important controversy, we do hereby request your Venerable Body to enter at once upon the consideration and judicial investigation of the Complaint hereby presented, to issue the contro-

versy and to finally determine the important questions involved, so as to secure the unity and the peace of the Church at the earliest possible day.

In our judgment the grounds or reasons of this Complaint are as follows:

1. The answer of the Presbytery of New York to the mandate of the General Assembly errs in that it declares that the teaching and preaching in the First Presbyterian Church conform to the system of doctrine taught in the Confession of Faith. The Presbytery in the action complained of did not carry out the mandate of the Assembly but evaded it, entering a judgment of its own that was in fact a reversal by a lower court, of the action of the supreme court. Such a procedure is in violation of the provision of Chapter XII., Section 5, which gives the Assembly immediate jurisdiction over any Church, Presbytery or Synod, and is, therefore, a denial of the Assembly's authority of final judgment.

2. The adoption of this answer by the Presbytery of New York to the mandate of the General Assembly puts the stamp of approval by one of our Presbyteries upon teaching and preaching of doctrines judged by many to be contrary not only to the doctrines of the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church, but also to those of historic and evangelical Christianity, and thus repudiates the glorious history of Scriptural testimony by the Presbyterian Church in all its history.

3. The answer of the Presbytery of New York to the mandate of the General Assembly will have the effect of encouraging dissemination of such views and will further increase the present disquietude in the said Presbyterian Church, and practically set at nought the deliverances of the Assemblies of 1910, and the positive mandate of 1916 and the reaffirmation of 1923.

4. The answer and action of the Presbytery of New York in adopting this report accepts the disclaimer of the author of the sermon "Shall the Fundamentalists Win," of the interpretation

and understanding of the sermon, and criticises the title as "ill-chosen and provocative." They object to the title as a "challenging title," but do not make it clear whether the author of the sermon repudiates the statements of the sermon, although he makes the following statement: "I am committed to the side called 'liberal'."

5. The action of the Presbytery of New York in adopting this report as its answer to the mandate of the General Assembly puts its approval upon a misleading and unjustifiable raising of an issue concerning the constitutional authority of the General Assembly to make an affirmation concerning the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America and thus engenders disloyalty to our highest Court; and the Presbytery exceeds its authority in as much as the General Assembly laid upon the Presbytery of New York the duty of requiring the teaching and preaching of the First Presbyterian Church to conform to the system of doctrine taught in the Confession of Faith, and therefore the Presbytery of New York overstepped the duties assigned to it when it undertakes to be an advisory body to the General Assembly.

6. The action of the Presbytery of New York in adopting this report as its answer to the mandate of the General Assembly is in error in as much as the Assembly having assumed the jurisdiction as provided for in Chapter XII and Section 5 and having put on record a judgment and mandate, the Presbytery had no liberty of expressing a contrary judgment, but only the duty of executing the mandate.

7. The action of the Presbytery of New York in adopting this report as its answer to the mandate of the General Assembly is misleading and unjust, because it evidently but erroneously aims to set forth that there has been an effort to pass judgment upon a minister by inference and implication and raises issues "concerning which Christian men of like integrity and faithfulness may rightly claim the privilege to differ," which seem to deny

and make light of the well established principle of our Polity, that there are also issues, truths, and forms with respect to which men of like character who have assumed the ordination vows of a minister, should not differ.

8. The action of the Presbytery of New York in adopting this report as its answer to the mandate of the General Assembly fails to disclaim the dangerous errors in the sermon "Shall the Fundamentalists Win" and similar teachings of the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church of New York. The Session and pastor of said Church by reason of their ordination vows and obligations must be assumed to be in agreement with the Standards of the Presbyterian Church, yet, it is regrettable that they allowed a sermon to be circulated that impugns the very doctrines that they profess to uphold. The report does not show that the statements of the sermon were withdrawn or repudiated by either the Session or the Supply preacher who is a member of another denomination.

9. The action of the Presbytery of New York in adopting this report as its answer to the mandate of the General Assembly suggests a doctrinal standard for ministers of other denominations teaching in Presbyterian pulpits, and the taking voluntarily, vows different from those taken in the ordination of ministers of our own denomination. This is a very dangerous proceeding as it erects two standards for ministers in the Church.

10. The action and decision of the Presbytery of New York in its answer to the mandate of the General Assembly is based upon statements of the Session and a letter from the special preacher in the First Presbyterian Church which letter is uncertain and couched in language without any clear declaration of belief that conforms to the system of doctrine taught in the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church, and is, therefore, evasive of the issue and unsettling of the faith of many people.

11. We believe that the action of the Presbytery of New York in adopting this report as its answer to the mandate of the General Assembly is highly injurious to the best interests of relig-



ion and minimizes the historic witnessing of the Presbyterian Church to the evangelical doctrines of Christianity.

And in conclusion, your complainants pray your Venerable Body, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, to receive and issue this Complaint and to assert its constitutional rights by taking such action as it deems wise to effectuate its directions to the Presbytery.

Ministers

Walter D. Buchanan,
Edgar Crossland
David Roswell Wylie
Albert D. Gantz,
John McNeill,
Paul D. Elsesser,
Henry M. Tyndall,
John C. Chapman,

Charles T. Schaeffer,
Wilson Aull,
George E. Sehlbrede,
George J. Russell
James Palmer,
James A. McCague,
Frederick W. Evans,
Mebane Ramsay.

Elders.

A. T. Patterson,
H. Percival Riley,
B. F. Van Kannell

Hans P. Freece,
W. A. Richmond,
C. W. Smith.

COMPLAINANTS' BRIEF

In presenting this brief concerning the recent action of the Presbytery of New York in the matter relating to the First Presbyterian Church of New York Presbytery we are impressed with the responsibility that rests upon us. This work is undertaken with an earnest endeavor to avoid all aspersions or personal reflections upon either the report or the Presbytery which adopted it. We wish at the outset to enter a disclaimer of anything but a courteous and fraternal feeling and a desire faithfully to traverse this matter as we point out what seem to us to be errors in the action taken. With this clear understanding of our aim and with

a conscience void of offence, we proceed to the examination of the report.

The issue raised by the action of New York Presbytery in the matter of the Assembly in 1923, involves two things vital to the peace and integrity of the Presbyterian Church,—the one vital to its doctrine, the other to its polity.

While primarily a matter of doctrine, namely the character of the teachings in the First Presbyterian Church, New York City, yet it has become, by virtue of ecclesiastical action, essentially a matter of polity, and we shall consider it first in that aspect.

1. The action of the Assembly of 1923 was as follows: "The 135th General Assembly . . . expressed its profound sorrow that doctrines contrary to the standards of the Presbyterian Church proclaimed in said pulpit (The First Church) have been the cause of controversy and division in our Church, and therefore would direct the Presbytery of New York to take such action . . . as will require the preaching and teaching in the First Presbyterian Church of New York to conform to the system of doctrines taught in the Confession; and that said Presbytery report its action in a full transcript of its records to the 136th General Assembly of 1924."

It is immaterial to the present case that the Assembly associated with that direction, a deliverance as to certain essential points of the Confession. We are not concerned to interpret that deliverance. Whether it be binding or not, is irrelevant to the question we bring before your honorable body, namely, whether a Presbytery is bound to respect and obey a mandate of the Assembly, and whether upon its refusal to do so, the Assembly may enforce its authority.

It should be assumed that the Assembly having given a Presbytery a mandate must see that it is obeyed. To admit any other possibility would be to belittle the Highest Court, and to open the way for any lower court to flout its authority on whatever occasion. The integrity of our entire Presbyterian system

is staked upon the willingness and ability of the Assembly to enforce its mandate.

So then, the Assembly, in this case, having assumed original jurisdiction, and having issued a direction to the Presbytery of New York in clear, explicit terms, and having directed the Presbytery to report its action in a full transcript of its records to the 136th Assembly of 1924, the only ground on which the Presbytery could contest the Assembly's jurisdiction, judgment and mandate, would be that it was unconstitutional—*ultra vires*.

This contention cannot be sustained.

1. Because Sec. V., Ch. XII., of the Form of Government, clothes the Assembly with "the power of deciding in all controversies respecting doctrine and discipline; of reproving, warning, or bearing testimony against error in doctrine, or immorality in practice, in any church, presbytery or synod, . . . of suppressing schismatical contentions and disputations; and, in general, of recommending and attempting reformation of manners, and the promotion of charity, truth and holiness, through all the churches under their care." This power is in addition to that given under Sec. IV., as the final court of appeal, in the disposition of cases brought up in regular process. It is the power of original jurisdiction,—of taking cognizance of error or immorality, in any church, presbytery or synod and of coming to a judgment and enforcing it.

Dr. Charles A. Hodge in his article on the Assembly's Power of Superintendence, published first in the Presbyterian Theological Review, and later in his treatise on Church Polity, says, "The General Assembly, unless expressly prohibited by the Constitution, can exercise, when the emergency demands it, its power to correct abuses or evils, immediately, in any part of the church. It has the right on its responsibility to God, to refuse seats to commissioners, or to dissolve any of the lower courts, if the safety or well-being of the church requires it. . . . This right

of peremptory and immediate action is the right of self-preservation which belongs to all bodies and associations. It is exercised by all legislative bodies."

Dr. Hodge quotes Hill's Institutes as follows, calling him "the highest modern authority" of the Scottish Church on such matters; "In the exercise of these powers, the General Assembly often issues peremptory mandates, summoning individuals and inferior courts to appear at its bar. It sends precise orders to particular judicatories directing, assisting and restraining them in the exercise of their functions and (in) its superintending, controlling authority maintains soundness of doctrine, checks irregularity and enforces general laws through all districts of the Church."

Dr. Hodge also says, "That our church from the first adopted the standards of the Church of Scotland, both as to faith and Form of Government."

So then there can be no question of the Assembly's right of original jurisdiction, on its own cognizance of error or immorality.

But in this case, the error was brought to its knowledge in a regular and constitutional way, namely by the overture of the Presbytery of Philadelphia. So that its judgment that "doctrines contrary to the standards had been proclaimed in the First Presbyterian Church, and its direction to the Presbytery of New York to take such action as will require the teaching and preaching in that pulpit to conform to the standards, were both, indisputably, within its powers.

Nor may the Presbytery of New York contend, that the action of the Assembly, at any stage of its procedure, in judgment or mandate was in error or hasty or ill-advised or without adequate investigation. It is not for a lower court to raise that question. The Higher Court, when acting constitutionally, must be its own judge of proper procedure, and of the degree of knowledge necessary to form a judgment and give a direction. All that,

lies within its own discretion and must lie there, if there is to be a final authority.

But as a matter of fact, the sermon of Dr. Fosdick, which the First Church has called "provocative" and which was controversial and which contained the errors complained of in the Overture, was well-known to the Assembly, as it had been published and distributed countrywide.

In these circumstances, the recent action of the Presbytery of New York under the mandate, was in derogation of the dignity and authority of the Assembly, so that this Assembly must, of its own motion, take notice of its evasion of the mandate, and take immediate measures to enforce that mandate.

But in order that the Assembly might know that some members of the Presbytery of New York, recognize the full authority, in the premises, of the last Assembly, to issue the direction it did issue, we are here to complain before your honorable body against the recent action of the Presbytery of New York, and we rest our complaint on the following grounds:

These stated briefly are,

First,—That the Presbytery of New York, having been directed to do a particular thing, instead of that, opened up the case, and entered its own judgment that there was no error in the teaching and preaching in the First Church, and, therefore, that the highest court was mistaken in the judgment, and that its mandate had no ground. We complain that to take such action was beyond the power of the lower court, whose function was not to discuss the judgment of the Assembly or to criticize it however disagreeable it might be, much less to evade or disobey it, but to honor and enforce it.

What will be the end, if a lower court, may sit in judgment upon an issue already determined by the highest court? There is only one end to such procedure, if the highest court tolerates it, and that is the nullification of all authority. Ecclesiastical as well as civil authority rests on the theory that its judgment will

not be satisfactory to all parties in interest, but that this power of final decision must be lodged somewhere, and that such decision when made, terminates controversy and procedure.

Second,—We complain that the Presbytery of New York, having in spite of the mandate, entered into the merits of the case, did not conduct a real and unprejudiced inquiry, such as the seriousness of the case, if opened, required, that it gave no scope to the investigation, that Dr. Fosdick's statement of views was accepted without due and critical analysis, without specific investigation of his views on important points in controversy; that he was accepted as evangelical because he called himself evangelical.

It is evident from its own report that the plan of the Committee was not to make a searching inquiry concerning the matter of the mandate of the General Assembly, but to allay unrest. We quote the following from its report:

"It is not to be doubted that one of the safest cures for controversy that tends to division, is the awakening of confidence, the setting free of men's spirits in mutual trust . . . the Committee proceeds to state the grounds upon which we rest our appeal for the restoration of confidence."

Also the following first paragraph of Dr. Fosdick's letter to the Committee is interesting in this connection:

"I welcome the opportunity which the appointment of your Committee affords me to express my attitude toward the theological controversy in the Presbyterian Church which, in part at least, has centered in me."

In fact the entire letter of Dr. Fosdick is couched in vague language and contains no unequivocal and perspicuous statement of conformity in his belief to our Confessional Standards. Although the Committee seems eager and solicitous in his defense, it admitted that in Dr. Fosdick's letter "words are used in a different sense from that to which the Church has been accustomed." There was evidently no desire on the part of Dr. Fosdick to use language that could not be misunderstood, or to proclaim himself

as in accord with the plain teachings of our Confession in its doctrinal statements concerning the Virgin Birth, the Atonement, the Resurrection, the Ascension and the Second Coming of our blessed Lord; and there is no evidence that the Committee had questioned him concerning these fundamental doctrines.

We complain that no such judgment of Dr. Fosdick's conformity, in his teaching and preaching, to the Westminster Standards is justified by

1. His sermon, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" which, with other information, led to the judgment of the 135th Assembly of 1923. The letter from the Session of the First Church, submitted in the Committee's report states: "We applaud the motive which prompted this sermon and its purpose which was, as indicated by the text, to inculcate the duty of mutual tolerance while waiting for God, in His providence, and by His spirit to decide questions in dispute," and that "we make due allowance for the fact that the preacher had been aroused by a theological controversy then acute in another communion", and "the sermon itself seemed to us open to misunderstanding and criticism, for the reason, that while the preacher presented two extreme views on several points of Christian doctrine and did not clearly define his own position with regard to them, his hearers might not unreasonably infer that he was personally committed to all the advanced opinions for which he asked toleration."

In Dr. Fosdick's letter to the Committee he says, "I am a liberal." He is, therefore, committed to the liberal opinions in his sermon entitled, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" In that sermon is set forth very clearly Dr. Fosdick's attitude of inability to believe in the "biological miracle" of the Virgin Birth; in the plenary inspiration of the Bible; in the sacrificial atonement of Christ and in the second coming of our Lord. In that sermon he also says "speaking, as I do, from the viewpoint of liberal opinion . . . "

It is significant that in all the months which have elapsed since the last Assembly and in view of the challenge which has been broadcast, Dr. Fosdick has been silent.

2. By parts of his other writings. These contain so much that show his nonconformity to the Westminster Standards that it is difficult—without unduly prolonging this brief—to know what quotations to include.

Dr. Fosdick says in his letter that he believes in the “sacrificial Saviorhood” of Jesus Christ. To Presbyterians and Evangelicals this vague language means His Sacrificial Atonement if it means anything; and yet in his book entitled, “Christianity and Progress”, page 43, he says: “As men’s thought of God has thus been molded by the idea of progress on the earth, so, too, the Christ they preach is not primarily, as of old, the victim by whose substitutionary sacrifice the race of men has found an open door from the bottomless pit of endless woe to a blessed immortality in Paradise. The modern emphasis is all another way. Christ is the divine revealer whose spirit alone can transform individuals and save society. The sort of character he was, the life he lived, the ideas he promulgated, are the salt that can preserve human life, the light that can illumine the way to a kingdom of righteousness on earth. He himself is the leader in the fight for that kingdom, his sacrifice part of the price it costs . . . ”

This is not in conformity with the statement of our Confession of Faith Chap. 8, Sec. 5: “The Lord Jesus in his perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself which He through the eternal spirit once offered up unto God hath fully satisfied the justice of His Father and purchased not only reconciliation but an everlasting inheritance in the Kingdom of Heaven for all those whom the Father hath given unto Him.”

Take another example. In his letter he says, “I believe in his resurrected and triumphant life.” To Presbyterians and Evangelicals that vague language, if it means anything, means that the Special Preacher believes that Christ rose from the dead

on the third day, in the same body in which he died; and yet Dr. Fosdick in his Inaugural Address, delivered in Union Theological Seminary, New York City, September 30, 1915, said:

"In the Bible immortality is indissolubly associated with the Resurrection of the body; among us is an idea of immortality in which the body has no part."

It is to be noted that the address, from which the above quotation is made, was entitled "A Modern Preacher's Problem in his use of the Scriptures"; and Dr. Fosdick declares himself to be a "Liberal." Here Dr. Fosdick's position is diametrically opposed to the teaching of our Confession of Faith, Chap. 8, Sec. 4:

"On the third day he arose from the dead, with the same body in which he suffered; with which also he ascended into Heaven, and there sitteth at the right hand of His Father, making intercession, and shall return to judge men and angels at the end of the world."

That Dr. Fosdick does not conform in his teaching and preaching to the Westminster Standards is shown in his book entitled, "Christianity and Progress" where on page 235, he says:

"The achievement of a worthy idea of God involves therefore, the ability to discover God in all life, outside the church as well as within and in people who do not believe in him nor recognize him, as well as in those who do."

And on page 239 of the same book he says:

"He (God) does not wait to be welcomed. He (God) does not insist on being consciously recognized before He enters a man's life."

This is out of keeping with the statement of our Confession of Faith, Chap. 14, Sec. 1, "the grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the spirit of Christ in their hearts; and is ordinarily wrought by the Word."

And contrary to John's Gospel 1; 11. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not, but as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."

A Presbyterian clergyman wrote Dr. Fosdick asking him the following three questions:

"How Christ came into the world," "Has Christ a human body in Heaven?" "If Christ does not come back in a human body, then in what way will He come?" Dr. Fosdick's answer to the first question was—after saying his position as to the Virgin Birth was not dogmatic—"so far as I am able to judge the evidence available, however, it seems to me very probable that Jesus was born to both Joseph and Mary." In answer to the second question he said: "I do not believe that our Lord has a human body in Heaven for I do not think that flesh and blood can inherit eternal life, only spirit is immortal." His answer to the third question was: "I do not know the nature of His plans, and I do not think any one else does. I do not think it credible that an individual return of Jesus in physical form is likely to be the method."

In a sermon entitled, "What is Christianity?" preached in the First Church of New York September 30, 1923, and another sermon preached in the same pulpit December 2, 1923, entitled, "The Deepening of Faith," both of which were printed in a monthly magazine published by the Committee of Ninety-nine in the interests of the First Church, and copies of which are herewith submitted, we find the same lack of conformity to the Westminster Standards.

In the first named of these sermons attention is called to the following quotations:

"At the very beginning we have presented to us in the Gospels a personality living a kind of life that has made Him alike the ideal of man and the symbol of God. . . . One reason why religion as the reproduction of the life of Jesus is convinc-

ing lies in the fact that there is nothing that we need so much as a way of living . . . The deepest need of human life, therefore, is a way of living—with ourselves, with our fellows, with our God—a way of living that will put into life richness and worth and peace."

So, persistently, Dr. Fosdick teaches that Christianity is an imitation of Christ rather than a life redeemed by Christ, an assertion of progressive Christianity and a practical denial of Scripture truth.

In the sermon entitled "The Deepening of Faith" is the following:

"In the second place there are many hesitant believers held back from becoming glorious believers because they are on the wrong track as to what Christianity is all about . . . talk with our young people and see! Nine times out of ten their religious perplexities spring from the fact that they have religion entangled with things that do not matter to religion:—theories of fiat creation, conceptions of the miraculous that have no meaning in modern life, ideas of inspiration as inerrant verbal dictation, childish ideas of God as an individual like themselves, only bigger, off somewhere, pictures of Hell as a place of hopeless torment into which Almighty God thrusts His erring children. As one sees these young folk stumbling in their faith because of these entanglements he wishes to cry, not simply so that they can hear, but so that their ministers, Sunday School teachers, fathers and mothers can hear: What have these to do with religion?"

Our assertion of the lack of conformity of Dr. Fosdick to the Westminster Standards is further emphasized by certain passages in his sermon entitled "The Divinity of Jesus," although in his letter referred to he states that he believes in the deity of Christ, I quote:

"I have heard them (some Protestants) take a phrase, 'Jesus is God,' not to be found either in Scripture or the creeds,

and set that up as a standard of regularity in doctrine. But to suppose that the phrase 'Jesus is God,' is an adequate expression of the Christian faith about Christ is to display an abysmal ignorance of what the Church has stood for. That statement alone is not orthodoxy, it is heresy; it leaves out of account the plain and unmistakable fact that Jesus was also man. Jesus was man and he must be God in what sense he can be God, being assuredly man"

"They (his disciples) did not start by believing in opinions about him or doctrines concerning him; they started by believing in **him**. The objective of their faith was not a theory; it was his personality, his life. And the older I grow, the more certain I am that this is what we always believed in when we believed hard: We are believing in somebody's life."

"The quality in Jesus is the most beautiful thing that ever was seen on earth. It is the best we know. It is the loveliest possession that the race has to show for all its millenniums of travail on this planet. It has made more difference to the spiritual life of man than anything that ever happened here. And you think that it was an accident! I say that solution is impossible. That is the most irrational thing you can say about it. No, it is a revelation of the creative reality that lies at the heart of the universe"

"You see, my friends, Christianity is the religion of incarnation, and its central affirmation is that God can come into human life."

We also call attention to the following quotations from his sermon entitled "Progressive Christianity":

"There are some of us here this morning who were brought up in a system of Christian thinking in which, if we had remained, we would have been compelled either to give up our Christianity or else to commit deadly assault and battery on our growing intelligence. We are thanking God today that we moved out from that Haran into a freer land. To make this concrete,

how many of us at one time thought that the inspiration of the Bible made it from beginning to end a book upon a common infallible level. From Genesis to Revelation it was to us a book of equal spiritual insight and of equal authority. To be sure, even when we were boys we discovered to our anxiety that in the early manuscripts of the Bible God walks as a man in a garden in the cool of the day or that on a mountain top he hides Moses in a rock's cleft and puts his hand across the cleft so that Moses cannot see his face and yet can see his 'back-parts,' while in later manuscripts in the Bible we keep running across words like these: 'No man hath seen God at any time.' "

"To see men's thoughts of God grow from the time they thought of him as a man upon a mountain until they thought of him as a father of all creation, in whom we live and move and have our being; to see the thoughts of men about immortality grow from the time when there was no hope until the triumphant announcements began to come: 'For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality'; to see men's thoughts of their relation to God grow from the time they stood afar off frightened at the thunder and lightning of Sinai, until they heard the voice that said: 'Enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret'; to see God progressively unfolding himself in love to men as men progressively are able to understand him more, and to see the Bible as the record of this amazing progress of revelation—that is the privilege of any lover of the Book today. Therefore I am not on the defensive about these new views of the Bible, as though they were somewhat heretical and needed defense; I am on the offensive for them as the one platform on which the modern man can stand and maintain at the same time his reverence for the revealing Book of God and the integrity of his intelligence in using it."

Dr. Fosdick preached four lenten sermons in the First Presbyterian Church on successive evenings beginning March 18,

1924. We received a letter dated March 19, 1924, from a well-known deacon in the Presbyterian Church in which he says that he had attended the first of these lectures the night before and adds:

"In his address last night Dr. Fosdick stated, among other things, that the Doctrine of one God in three persons and three persons in one God is 'mathematical nonsense'. This statement was repeated and clearly revealed his Unitarian belief. I am quite sure that if a stenographic report of the sermon last night had been taken, that it would have eliminated much, if not all, of the discussion as to just what Dr. Fosdick meant in his sermon "Shall the Fundamentalists Win". There may have been some doubt as to his meaning **then**, but last night he was clear, distinct, emphatic and nonequivocal concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity."

That there was no serious and deliberate and unprejudiced investigation made by the Committee whose report was adopted by Presbytery seems to be indicated by the fact that after having the matter under advisement from June, 1923, the first recommendation in their report submitted to Presbytery, January 14, 1924, contained the opening clause, "The Presbytery states that it believes in the purpose and character of the preaching and teaching in the First Church of New York," and when they met for the discussion of the report three weeks later they requested and were permitted to change that sentence so as to read "Since the Committee reports that the doctrines of grace, centering in our Lord Jesus Christ, are being proclaimed . . ."

So we complain that the Presbytery evaded the mandate of the Assembly; that its procedure of inquiry was so evidently biased that it has aroused criticism in the Church at large; that it has made for continued controversy and not for peace; that it subverts the faith; that it holds the last Assembly up to contempt by criticising its judgment and disobeying its mandates and that its action strikes at the roots of all authority in the church.

To sum up:

First, it was the obligation of the Presbytery to carry out the clear and explicit direction of the Assembly. It did not.

Second, The Presbytery, notwithstanding the mandate, having entered upon an inquiry into the facts, must make that inquiry unprejudiced and exhaustive. It was not.

Third, It appears from the evidence we have furnished that the teachings of Dr. Fosdick in the First Church, have not been, and are not now, evangelical.


We are faced by this most unique, anomalous and alarming situation:—A minister of another denomination acts as stated supply, or preacher in one of our pulpits,—an arrangement which, according to our rules, contemplates only a limited period of time but which has continued for about five years; an invited guest but receiving a salary for his services; one who has assumed no responsible vows to our great church, but, admitting that he is, in part, the center of a theological controversy in this, a credal church, which is his host;—and yet by his very attitude causing serious division among the members of the family in whose company he sojourns; and one whose preaching has been adjudged by the Supreme Court of our Church to be contrary to its Standards.

On any one and on all of the grounds stated we ask your honorable Commission in the interest of the dignity and authority of the Assembly, the peace of the Church and fidelity to the Confession and loyalty to divine truth to direct the Presbytery of New York to take such steps as shall at once terminate the relation now existing between the First Presbyterian Church of New York and the Rev. Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick.

WALTER D. BUCHANAN,
ALBERT D. GANTZ,
JOHN McNEILL,

Committee of Complainants.

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